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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2771
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1134
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3162
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2548
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001208

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR KG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH
KYRGYZSTAN'S MINISTER OF DEFENSE

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Kyrgyz Minister of Defense Kalyev met with the Ambassador on November 25 at MOD headquarters for her introductory office call. This was the first opportunity for them to meet face-to-face and discuss the current situation as it relates to U.S./Kyrgyz military cooperation. The meeting went very smoothly with the emphasis being placed on continued engagements between CENTCOM and Kyrgyz armed forces, particularly requesting additional assistance to bolster security in southern Kyrgyzstan around Batken. Discussion also touched on a threatened KAN air traffic controller strike at Manas Airbase (Note: controllers subsequently called off the strike. End Note.) and the U.S. special forces weapons seizure last August. Kalyev noted that each incident was unfortunate and he would approach the appropriate senior government officials on the matters.

U.S.-Kyrgyz Bilateral Cooperation

¶2. (C) Defense Minister Kalyev thanked the Ambassador for a broad range of projects funded through the Office of Military Cooperation. Specifically, he highlighted the many recent success stories and ongoing construction projects. Kalyev expressed his gratitude for the Koi Tash military academy saying that with construction nearly complete, he looks forward to the official opening. The U.S. assistance in building the training facilities for the MOD Scorpion Brigade at Tok Mok was also a resounding success, as it benefits the operational capabilities of those units. Kalyev also pointed out the recent start of construction at Besh Kungay military hospital and how it will further improve the quality of care provided to all Kyrgyz armed forces. Turning to training, Kalyev insisted that the U.S. IMET program is of great use to the MOD as numerous officers have graduated and are being very productive within the ministry providing useful assistance and direction. He looks forward to continued progress on the NCO professional development program CENTCOM

is pursuing. This will benefit the Kyrgyz as they work at transitioning from a post-Soviet minded military to a more westernized military able to work closely with U.N. and NATO partners.

¶3. (C) Kalyev then went on to highlight that his decision to redesignate the Peacekeeping unit from an engineering/demining company to a motorized rifle company was a good decision. He noted that the Kyrgyz already have a trained unit to begin work with and will not have to rely on outside assistance to build one from scratch. He did, however, note that the Kyrgyz could not do it all alone. The unit will still need U.S. assistance to train and equip the unit before it could be deployed in support of U.N.-sanctioned operations.

Armed Forces Reformation

¶4. (C) Minister Kalyev noted that the reformation of the armed forces was underway. The Kyrgyz see their southern border as being the focal point of potential insurgency and the area in most need of fortifying. He related his concern that this area was the focus of the terrorist insurgency in 1999-2000, when many Kyrgyz soldiers died fighting off a group of armed extremists. The plan, as he pointed out, is to reinforce the Batken area with a mobile, rapid reaction special forces unit capable of quickly quelling any uprising which would endanger the people or sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan. He requested continued assistance from CENTCOM to conduct a technical site survey of the area for barracks construction and communications connectivity. Kalyev plans to eventually deploy three battalions in the Batken area, then one in

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Jalalabad and finally, in 2011, one in Tash Kumer) these three areas being the routes most used by terrorists and narco-traffickers. He went on to say that Kyrgyz intelligence indicates that terrorists are moving back into Kyrgyzstan and the deployment of armed forces in this region may in itself be enough to secure the border. This would continue to support the joint U.S./Kyrgyz counterterrorism objectives.

Challenges to Continued Cooperation

¶5. (C) Ambassador Gfoeller noted that everything Kalyev said was important and the U.S. will continue to be a good partner and look for ways to provide future assistance. She noted the recent resolution of the outstanding 505 agreement and how that is an indication that, by working together, the Kyrgyz armed forces will receive the help needed to continue to improve as it moves forward with its reformation. She then brought up one of the most pressing obstacles to continued cooperation. Kyrgyzaeronavigatsia (KAN) is still planning to strike against coalition aircraft beginning December 1. A strike, she said, would create a huge problem for coalition aircraft supporting combat operations over Afghanistan. Although the Ambassador had already spoken to other high-level Kyrgyz governmental leaders, she wanted Kalyev to understand that this could be an impediment to future cooperation should the strike happen. Kalyev, understanding the situation to a degree, commented that KAN has a legal right to strike, but said he failed to see a satisfactory rationale for it. KAN, he feels, is trying to circumvent to political system for its own end. He did not say he would seek to intervene on behalf of the U.S. in this instance. (Note: KAN air traffic controllers subsequently called off the threatened strike, saying they would give the Kyrgyz government until April 2009 to meet their demands. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Ambassador Gfoeller then turned to the Defense Attaché (DATT) for any additional comments. The DATT again thanked Kalyev for his continued support of U.S. military engagements

with the Kyrgyz armed forces. The DATT then went on to note that the situation regarding the seizure of a U.S. special forces training team's weapons in August will have broad reaching ramifications should it not be satisfactorily resolved. Kalyev, again stating his familiarity with the incident, commented that the incompetence of U.S. and Kyrgyz personnel caused the situation. He indicated that the U.S. did not abide by Kyrgyz law when the team imported its weapons and is now paying the price for incomplete coordination. Kalyev said when he traveled to the U.S., he saw many instances of incompetence, and seemed to be drawing parallels here. While not overly concerned with the potential cessation of counterterrorism training by U.S. special forces units and his own soldiers, he did indicate that he would meet with the Minister of the Internal Affairs to look into the situation. He did not seem to be aware that the Prosecutor General had dropped the criminal case in the incident, but centered on, as he stated, the incompetence of those involved.

LITZENBERGER